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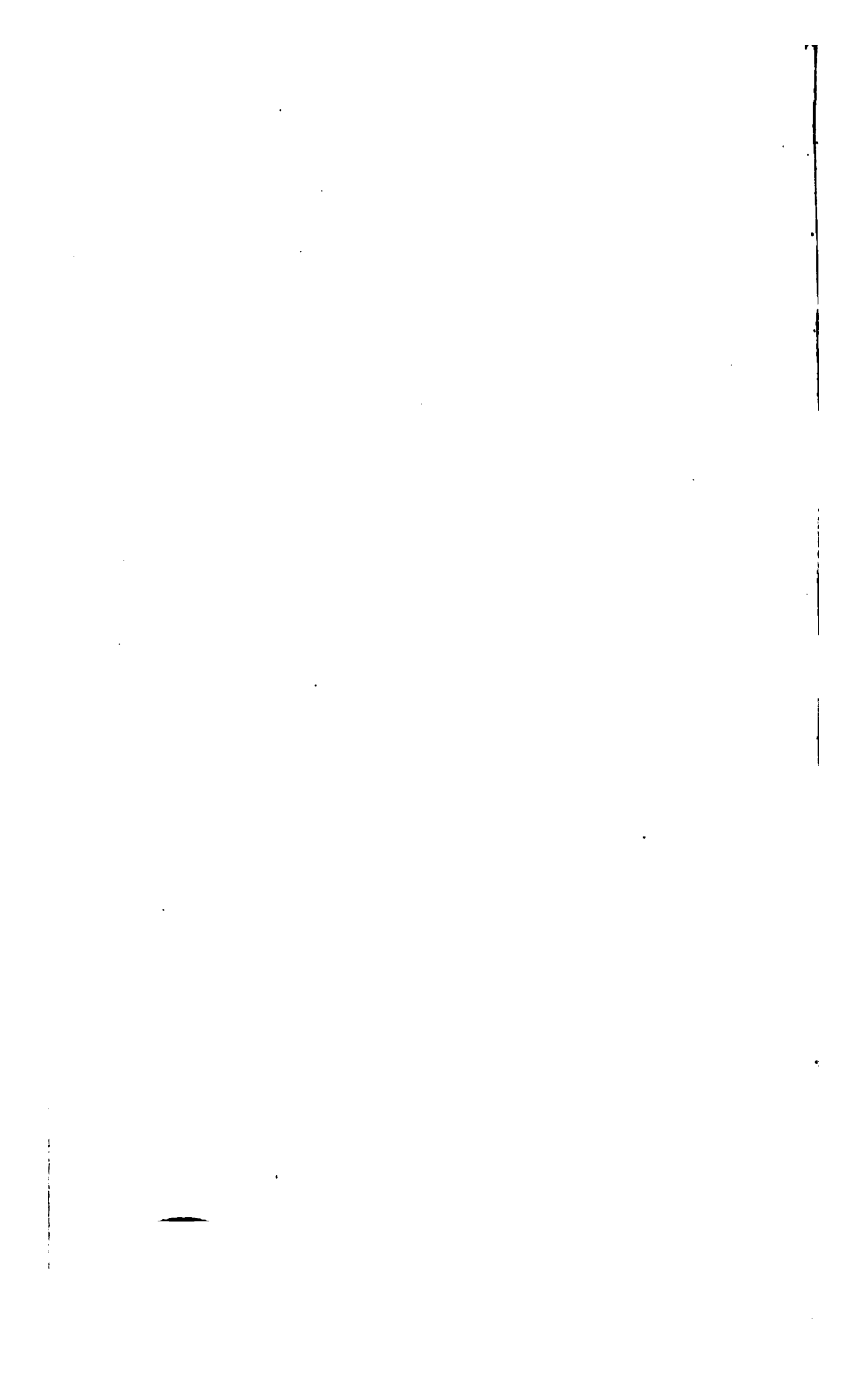
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A
FAMILIAR ILLUSTRATION
OF CERTAIN
PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

RELATING TO
THE POWER OF MAN TO DO THE WILL OF GOD,
ORIGINAL SIN,
ELECTION AND REPROBATION,
THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST, AND
ATONEMENT FOR SIN BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

By **JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.**

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THE

P R E F A C E.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IN all theological controversies our appeal lies to the *Bible*, which contains the writings of the inspired prophets, and of the apostles and evangelists, who have recorded the precepts and doctrines of Christ. To those who lived in the times in which these books were published, they were, no doubt, very intelligible; the language in which they are written, and the customs to which they allude, being perfectly known to them. But what was easy to *them*, a long course of time has rendered extremely difficult to *us*, who use a very different language, and whose manners and customs are so exceedingly unlike those of the Jews. On this account, it may puzzle the greatest scholar of the present age to make out the sense of a passage of scripture, which could not but have been perfectly understood by the most illiterate person in that age. In this state of things, the *ignorant and unlearned* are very liable to *wrest the scriptures*, as the apostle Peter says they ever have done, while good sense and sound learning often maintain a very unequal contest.

It is another unfavourable circumstance with respect to the right understanding of the scriptures in this country, that the English translation of them was made at a time when the christian world was but just emerged from the darkness of popery, and while the belief of all those opinions which are combated in the *Appeal* was almost universally retained. Our translators, therefore, having been educated in the belief of, and in a reverence for, those particular opinions, and not having had their minds sufficiently enlightened to call them in question, it is no wonder that, without any ill design, they should, in many places of their version, have expressed their own sentiments, and not those of the apostles. In all these cases a just translation is all that is necessary to remove the errors into which a wrong translation has led us. But with respect to them, you, my brethren, who are not acquainted with the languages in which the scriptures were originally written, must necessarily depend upon other persons for the interpretation of them. You may however be able, in a great measure, to judge for yourselves concerning different translations, by considering, if you will take pains to reflect upon the subject, which rendering of a doubtful passage is most agreeable to the general-strain of the scriptures, and to common sense.

Do not, however, immediately conclude that an interpretation of a passage in scripture is *unnatural*, because, when it is first proposed to you, it may seem so; because this may arise from nothing but your
your

your having been long accustomed to understand it in a different sense, and from having imagined, though without sufficient grounds, that the tenor of scripture favoured a contrary sense. The Roman catholics, I doubt not, think it very unnatural to interpret the words of our Saviour, *This is my body*, in any other than in the most literal manner; and they think that our Lord's saying upon another occasion, *Unless ye eat of the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*, abundantly confirms their interpretation.

Now, in this little treatise, I desire no greater indulgence in the interpretation of scripture than all Protestants think themselves justified in taking, when they assert, that the meaning of these figurative expressions is, not that the *flesh and blood*, but that the *doctrine* of Christ is to be received and digested, that is, to be improved and practised by us, in order to our final salvation. Since the very strongest figures of speech are manifestly used in almost all the books of scripture, it must be very unreasonable to expect that the most literal interpretation should always be the best.

I must further apprise you, my brethren, that the passages which I have attempted to explain, being, for the most part, highly figurative, are, on that account, peculiarly difficult to understand; so that though I may not have hit upon the precise sense of the writers, there may be no doubt, from other considerations, that the sense which I am combating

not the true one; which is quite sufficient for my purpose. It by no means follows that because I am wrong, my adversaries are right. In these cases there is the greatest room for criticism, and diversity of opinion. I have given what at present appears to me to be the real sense of every text of scripture which I have taken into consideration; but I shall gladly avail myself of the new lights which may be thrown upon any of them in future editions of this pamphlet.

In the mean time, with great diffidence of my own judgement, I recommend what I have now written to your most serious and candid consideration; desiring that you would read it with your Bibles at hand, turning to every passage to which I refer, and reading what goes before and after it; because I have no doubt but that, in this manner, you will see much more reason, if not to approve of my interpretations, yet to reject those of my adversaries, than I have suggested in this treatise, in which I have made a point of being as concise as I possibly could, consistently with perspicuity.

The rapid sale of the *Appeal* makes me hope that, inconsiderable as the performance is, it has been the instrument of some good, in the hands of that Being who works by small things as well as by great ones.

A
FAMILIAR ILLUSTRATION
OF CERTAIN
PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

I. OF THE POWER OF MAN TO DO THE WILL OF GOD.

THAT the sacred writers consider all mankind as naturally possessed of sufficient power to do what God requires of them, is evident from their earnest remonstrances and expostulations with persons of all ranks and conditions, and their severe censure of them when they refuse to comply with their exhortations. Nor was this the case with the *Jews* and *Christians* only, who were favoured with divine revelation. The apostle Paul evidently considers the *Gentiles* also in the same light; though, much not being given to them, much was not required of them.

In the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans this apostle represents the Gentile world, in general, as having grossly corrupted themselves; yet, in that very representation, he not only says, ver. 18, 19. that they had subjected themselves to the "wrath of God, revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God manifest, for God hath showed it unto them;" but ver. 32. that "knowing the judgement of God, (that

who commit such things are worthy of death,) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." So that the degeneracy and depravity into which they were sunk were owing, not to want of *ability*, but to *wilfulness*, and a determined opposition to the powers of conscience with which their Maker had endowed them, and which continued unceasing remonstrances within them. Reasoning with the Jews, in the second chapter, he gives the following representation of some of the Gentiles, ver. 14, 15. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law to themselves. Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the mean while, accusing or else excusing one another:" and he adds in the 26th and 27th verses, "Therefore, if the uncircumcision," i. e. the uncircumcised Gentile, "keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?" i. e. shall he not be equally accepted by God as a righteous Jew? "and shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?" I presume no one will think so meanly of St. Paul's reasoning as to suppose, that he here puts a case which either was true in *fact*, or possible in *nature*; but if the case either ever was true in fact, or *possible*, those uncircumcised Gentiles who should answer his demonstration must certainly have received from their Maker

Maker capacities and powers to do the will of God acceptably. And if others did not act in like manner, it was not owing to their not having received like natural powers, but to their not making a like improvement of them.

But let us attend to some passages which have been produced in proof that man is not, by nature, able to do the will of God, or that his Maker has not given him capacity and ability to know and do his will acceptably, without the superadded operations of special grace to remedy his natural inability.

1 Cor. ii. 14. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Upon this text I would observe first; that the word, which is here translated *natural*, properly signifies *animal*, or *sensual*. Thus 1 Cor. xv. 44, 46. the apostle uses the same word three times for that body which dies, and is buried, to distinguish it from that *spiritual* body which shall rise again; where the word *animal* much better expresses the apostle's meaning than *natural*. Again James uses it, ch. iii. 15. where our translators have rendered it *sensual*. "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." It is also used, ver. 19. of Jude's epistle, and rendered *sensual*. "These are they who separate themselves," sensual, "having the spirit." These are all the passages of the New Testament where I find this word used. And it appe

that where it denotes the character of persons, or the moral quality of things, our translators have rendered it *sensual*. Consequently, in consistency with themselves, they should have rendered the text under consideration, *But the sensual man* (who has no higher aims than the gratification of his animal senses) *receiveth not the things of the spirit of God*, &c. This would have been readily understood and acknowledged by all, and is perfectly consonant to what he says to the Romans, viii. 7. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Secondly: In this chapter the apostle assures the Corinthians, that the doctrine which he had preached to them did not take its rise from worldly wisdom, or philosophy, but was *that* only which had been revealed to the apostles by the spirit of God, ver. 10. That he had preached this doctrine in those terms only which the same spirit dictated, comparing the several particulars of it one with another, and with those things which the same spirit had revealed to the patriarchs and prophets of old: That none of the wise or powerful men of this world had, or could possibly have discovered these counsels of God revealed by the spirit of God in the gospel, which spirit the apostles have received, that they might know and instruct others in the things that are freely given us of God. "But the sensual man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God," revealed by it to the apostles, preached by them to the world, "for they are foolishness

foolishness to him," contradicting all his former sentiments and principles, to which he still adheres, "neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," i. e. by the sole instructions of the spirit, to which he neither attends nor submits. "But the spiritual man discerneth or judgeth all things," i. e. all the forementioned things of God revealed by his spirit; all gospel truths; "but he himself is discerned or judged of no man," i. e. he is not subjected in these respects to the judicature of the powers of this world, to the principles of human science, or the rules of human oratory.

Hence I would observe, first, that the *deep things of God*, or the things of the spirit of God, which the apostle speaks of in this chapter, are *the doctrines of the gospel revelation*. Now it is readily allowed, that as men were not endowed with any natural powers whereby they could discover these, they could not know them before they were revealed. But then, they were not under obligation to know or comply with them, till they were revealed. Secondly, That they who did not receive and comply with them, when revealed, are not represented as *incapable* through want of natural abilities and powers, but only as *disqualified*, or under a *moral impotence* through sensual dispositions which they indulged, and habits which they had contracted.

By the *spiritual man* seems to be primarily meant here, the *apostles*, to whom the spirit revealed the truths of the gospel; but they also

be comprehended under the denomination, who receive the gospel truths, believing in the veracity and submitting to the authority of the spirit which revealed them.

John xv. 5. "Without me ye can do nothing." This single clause of a long sentence, being separated from its connection with what goes before it, is produced as a proof that man is not able to do the will of God acceptably, without the immediate assistance, or operation, of special grace upon him through Christ. But, if we look into our Lord's discourse, we find him exhorting his disciples to adhere steadfastly to him and his doctrine, "that they might bring forth much fruit." He reminds them, that they had already gained much spiritual improvement by his instructions, ver. 3. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." He intimates that, if they abandoned him and his doctrine, they would deprive themselves of the means of fruitfulness. He is not speaking then of the natural powers of man, but of the importance of the doctrines which he taught to render men fruitful in good works; but this seems necessarily to suppose a *capacity* in man to understand and improve his doctrines to these purposes.

It seems to be treating Christ and his words with great irreverence, to apply them to other purposes than those for which he used them. We all readily admit that (in our Lord's sense of the expression) without him we can do nothing." i. e. If we abandon

don him and the gospel, we cannot be fruitful in holiness or good works; and are very thankful for the provision he hath made, and the assistances he hath afforded us by his word, "that we may bring forth much fruit."

Philip. ii. 13. "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

In this passage the apostle exhorts the Philippians to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," from a grateful sense of the goodness of God in granting them, for that purpose, the instructions and motives of the gospel, by which such convictions had already been awakened in them, as had excited them both to choose and perform what God required. The *energy*, or operation of God here spoken of, seems to be the energy of *instruction* and *persuasion*. No doubt it is a very reasonable and powerful motive to us all to work out our salvation, that God, in unspeakable love and good-will, is continually working in us, by the truths and motives of the gospel, to choose and perform what he hath required of us.

1 Cor. xv. 10. "But by the grace of God I am what I am."

Let any one carefully attend to the whole case of Paul's conversion, from being a persecutor to become a preacher and an apostle of Jesus Christ, and then say whether it be reasonable to draw general conclusions respecting all men from such a case. However, we will all readily adopt his words, and say *through the grace of God*, and his favours freely bestowed

bestowed upon us by the gospel, *we are what we are.*

Eph. ii. 8. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

The word *that* doth not refer to faith, as is evident from the original, but to the preceding clause of the sentence. "That ye are saved by grace through faith," this "is not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." He is the sole author of this method of salvation.

Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements and do them."

Look into the prophet himself, and I think it will appear, that this is a prediction of the restoration of the people of the Jews to their own country at the end of the Babylonish captivity, and that afterwards they should no more return to the practice of idolatry, which their fathers had been so prone. Now, the story of that people informs us that this prediction is verified in fact. When God promises to give them

a new

a new heart, and to put a new spirit within them, it relates to the particular subject spoken of, viz. idolatry : and, in reality, there was a wonderful change wrought in the dispositions and practice of that people in this respect. This was effected by the deep impressions made upon them by the righteous judgments of God for the idolatries of their forefathers and of themselves. But the *new heart and new spirit* must not be understood of an universal or general change from evil to good, because the whole subsequent history of the Jews, and particularly in the gospel times, contradicts it. It may, however, refer to some greater change to be produced in the moral character of the Jewish nation, on their return from their present dispersion, produced by the consideration of the hand of God in it, as the just punishment of their former vices. But it seems a strange perversion, to make this particular prediction to the returning captives, a general promise to mankind, at least to christians, of producing in them a thorough change of heart and life by the immediate operation of the spirit of God. This may be called, *accommodating* scripture passages ; but it seems taking very bold liberties, of making what we please out of them, very inconsistent with a sincere belief in them, as containing the word of God.

Psalm li. 10. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

We ought not to interpret the figurative expressions of Hebrew poetry too literally, or to expect

it the rigid accuracy of expression of our western prose. The Psalmist seems to mean no more by *create*, than to *produce*, or *cause*; which does not exclude the instrumentality of ordinary means, any more than the word *renew*. Nay, the Psalmist seems to expect that the clean heart must be *created*, and the right spirit *renewed*, not by an immediate operation of sovereign and almighty grace, but by the instrumentality of those ordinary and usual *means* of grace which he had long enjoyed, and experienced the good effects of; and therefore he adds in the following words, ver. 11. "Cast me not away from thy presence," i. e. deprive me not of the ordinances of thy worship in the tabernacle, where thou manifestest thy presence in a glorious manner, "and take not thy holy spirit from me," i. e. that holy spirit with the illuminations of which he had, as a prophet, been so often favoured, and from which he had reaped great spiritual improvement.

Luke xxiii. 43. "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Although certain writers and teachers of religion profess not to mention the case of the penitent thief to encourage presumption and carelessness in any one, yet they mention it so often, and insist on it so much, as an instance of a great and sudden change taking place at the last hour of a poor sinner's life, at the same time insinuating that the same change may take place in others ("for the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that

that it cannot hear,") that I fear they do, in fact, unhappily encourage presumption and carelessness in many. Let us therefore consider this case with a little attention. .

The above-mentioned writers, &c. take for granted, what is by no means certain, that the penitent thief's knowledge of Christ, and repentance of his own sins, commenced only at the time of his crucifixion along with Jesus. But is it not possible, that the crime for which he suffered might have been committed a long time before, though he had been apprehended for it only very lately ; when, whatever change might in the mean time have been wrought in his character and conversation, the law must take its course, and he must suffer the punishment due to his misdeeds, though he had repented of them very sincerely, and become a new man ? The evangelist has said nothing that precludes this supposition ; and therefore we are at liberty to make it, especially if it will contribute to render the circumstances of the narrative more consistent and accountable. Let us see then what those circumstances are.

First, Observe that this penitent, in the reproof which he gave to his fellow-criminal, makes a candid and ingenuous confession of his crimes, and the justice of his punishment, and *that* grounded upon a just and proper principle, *the fear of God*. "not thou fear God, seeing that thou also art under the same condemnation ? And we indeed justly, receive the due reward of our deeds." This

much more like the language of one who had long reflected upon, been seriously affected with, and formed mature conclusions from the sad subject, than of one who was but just now struck with a conviction of his sins, and a sense of his miserable state.

Secondly, Observe also the clear and confident declaration which he makes concerning Jesus. "This man hath done nothing amiss." Can we suppose this declaration made by a man who had not known any thing of the person to whom he bears this testimony before this unhappy occasion? Doth it not seem rather the attestation of one who had had considerable knowledge of the rectitude of his character and the unblameableness of his conduct?

There are, I readily acknowledge, many difficulties attending the history of the penitent thief, which I have no occasion to consider in this place, it being sufficient for my present purpose to show, that the doctrine of the probability of repentance at the article of death proving acceptable will no longer have countenance from it.

John vi. 44. 65. "No man can come to me except it were given him of my Father. Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.—No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." Now how is it that God is elsewhere said to *draw* men, but by force of motives and instructions, which suppose men have a power of attending to them and imitating by them? It is also to be observed that, in the

the whole of the discourse, in which the words quoted above are introduced, Jesus is blaming the Jews for their infidelity; and it would be very extraordinary indeed, if for this purpose he should make use of an argument, which would entirely exculpate them, intimating that it was not in their power to do otherwise.

Our Lord sufficiently gives us to understand in what sense he uses the word *drawing* in the passage quoted above. He explains himself ver. 45. "It is written in the prophets." Isaiah lix. 13. "And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." This was the way in which God the Father drew some of the Jews to Christ at that time, viz. such of them as, influenced by reverence, love and duty to him, heard attentively, and learned the truths which he had already taught them by Moses and the prophets; but they who were of a different spirit and conduct, with respect to the divine truths already revealed, could not come to Christ, who constantly referred them to the testimonies of Moses and the prophets in proof of his divine mission. To them "it was not given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xiii. 11. Agreeably hereto he says on another occasion, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether be of God, or whether I speak of myself," John 17. And he thus remonstrates against the unbelieving Jews, chap. v. 39, &c. "Search the script.

for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me.—But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you.—How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only ?” This appears plainly to be the language of one who considered the cause of the unbelief of these Jews as arising not from natural inability, or the withholding of the grace of God, but from contracted evil principles and habits, to which they determinedly adhered ; as he speaks ver. 40, “ Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.”

II. OF ORIGINAL SIN.

THAT mankind are considerable *sufferers* in consequence of the fall of Adam is not denied ; but all the evils which Moses specifies as affecting his posterity on that account, are of a corporeal and temporal nature, viz. *labour, sorrow, and death*. It is possible, indeed, that, the body being more subject to disease, the mind may be more feeble, and therefore more prone to comply with some temptations ; but then it should also be considered, that a sickly constitution is favourable to many virtues, and we see that a state of confirmed health is often highly dangerous in a moral respect ; so that upon the whole it is probable that our condition is more favourable to virtue than that of Adam. That the sacred writers do not consider it as, upon the whole, worse than his,

his, is evident from their never giving the least hint, that any allowance will be made to men for that natural disadvantage. Nay, many of the sinful posterity of Adam are blamed more severely than he was for his sin; and if we consider his situation and the circumstances of his fall, we cannot suppose that he had greater strength of mind to resist temptation than we are now possessed of. Since, however, some particular texts are alleged, to prove that the nature of man is totally depraved by the fall, insomuch that all mankind, without exception, are now altogether incapable of any good thought, word, or action; and, moreover, that we are all subject to the everlasting wrath of God on account of the sin of Adam, I shall give a brief explication of the principal of those texts.

Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." If we understand this passage literally, it will be contradicted by the character which is immediately afterwards given of Noah, of whom it is said, ver. 9. "that he was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and that he walked with God." But it is plain that this wickedness of mankind was not owing to any *natural depravity*, which their derivation from Adam rendered necessary, but that it was a *voluntary corruption*, and had its rise from themselves only; for it is said, ver. 12. that "God look

upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Besides, this state of the world is alleged as a justification of the divine proceedings against them; whereas, if they had been corrupt by the *necessity of nature*, it must have operated as a plea in their favour, with that being who considers our frame, and remembers that we are but dust. If he makes suitable allowance for the infirmities of our *bodies*, much more would he consider the natural and necessary disorders of our *minds*.

Job xiv. 4. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." This is a proverbial expression, signifying that nothing can be more perfect than its original; but Job is not speaking in this place of the guilt and pollution of man, but of his sorrows and mortality.

Psaln li. 5. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This also has very much the air of a proverbial expression, signifying great depravity of heart, and very early habits of vice. That it was not intended to express a natural and invincible propensity to vice, is plain, because that would be inconsistent with the tenor of the whole psalm, in which the humble author seems disposed to aggravate rather than to extenuate his offences, to which this last-mentioned consideration would have greatly contributed.

Isa. v. 12, 13, 14. "Wherefore, as by one
man

man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, &c."

I think a careful and impartial reader will observe, that the apostle speaks not here of the death of children, whom he does not once mention, or refer to, through the whole argument. But he speaks of those who were not only *capable* of sinning, but had *actually* sinned, and refers us to the Mosaic history of mankind in the ages between the fall of Adam and the giving of the law by Moses. Sin and death entered into the world by Adam, and death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, consequently must have transgressed some law, ver. 14, "For, before the giving of the law by Moses, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law:" and the law of Moses they could not sin against before it was given. "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," i. e. by eating the forbidden fruit, or violating any positive law of life given to them. What law then had they sinned against? Most evidently, the law of righteousness which God had written on their hearts; the sanction of which they were also well apprized of, (as the apostle speaks of the Gentiles in general, ch. xii. 32. of this epistle,) "who knowing the judgement of God, (that they which commit such things are worthy of death,) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Hence it appears the

apostle does not speak of the sin of Adam being imputed to make men sinners, and subject them to death ; but of actual and personal sins, and of death as the recompense of them. Now look into the Mosaic history of this period, and we find before the flood "that the wickedness of men was great in the earth,"—Gen. vi. 5. "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. For all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth," ver. 11, 12. And after the flood, excepting the faith and obedience of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we have little else recorded besides transgressions of the law of righteousness ; sins which men committed, though "not after the similitude of Adam's transgression." As to the death of infants : God, the great giver of life, hath, undoubtedly, a perfect right to resume it whenever it seemeth meet to his infinite wisdom. But I do not recollect that the sacred writers do any where represent it as a *punishment* either for Adam's sin, or their own. In a few cases they speak of it as a punishment of the sin of their immediate parents, but then, as a punishment to their parents who had sinned, not to the children who had not sinned.

Rom. v. 6, 8. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.

"But God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Let the intelligent reader judge for himself, whether the apostle doth not speak here of the state of mankind (particularly of himself and the persons he writes

to)

to) before Christ's death, and the consequent publication of the gospel to the world, and intimate that the case is very different since that happy event? Doth he not plainly make the distinction in both verses, that we might not mistake his meaning, "when we were yet without strength, and while we were yet sinners?" But doth the case continue the same, since Christ died, with those to whom the blessings of the gospel are imparted? Then hath Christ died, and the gospel been published in vain. Yet some writers represent the state of those for whom Christ died, and who have received the gospel, as just the same, as to *strength*, with them who had not received it, and who lived before it was published. Surely, any of us would be displeased to have our words wrested to purposes so different from our intentions, especially when we had endeavoured to guard them from such abuse. God our maker hath given us intelligent capacities, suited to those discoveries which he hath made of his will, whether by the light of nature, or revelation; he hath given us also freedom of choice and action for the conduct of ourselves; he hath granted us the light and motives of the gospel for our fuller instruction and persuasion; he is ever present with us and ready to assist our sincere endeavours to know and to do his will; surely then, it is *unjust* and *ungrateful* to him to say that we are still *without strength*; and if we be *sinners*, it is wholly our own fault. As for the *Gentiles*, even the worst of them, the apostle no where ascribes their want of strength, to their not having

from their Maker sufficient abilities to know and do his will acceptably, but to their having voluntarily corrupted themselves and one another, and thereby lost the abilities which God had given them, and become *dead in trespasses and sins*.

Rom. vii. 7, 8. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

It appears to me that the apostle speaks here only of personal character and conduct, and the effects of them in producing governing habits; but not at all of any corruption or depravity of the *nature* of man effected by Adam's sin, whereby he is become *incapable* of doing that which is good, or of pleasing God. Adam, or his sin, is not mentioned by the apostle in treating of this subject. It is readily acknowledged, that a person who attaches himself to the gratification of his *carnal* or sensual appetites and passions cannot perform the will of God, but must daily become more and more alienated from *him*, and from his duty: but this is saying no more than that a wicked man cannot be a good man, or please God so long as he continues wicked. But it by no means follows that this man is unable to hear, understand, and receive salutary convictions from the truths of God, revealed by his Son Jesus Christ, and thereby become changed in his sentiments, dispositions, and conduct, and from *carnally* become *spiritually minded*. The various forms of speech which the apostle uses in the preceding and following

following verses seem only to express one and the same thing, viz. the change produced in the dispositions and conduct of men by preaching the gospel to them, and their attention to it, and sincere reception of it, together with the happy effects and consequences of it.

Ephesians ii. 3. "And were by nature children of wrath, even as others."

If we compare the passages in which the apostle uses the word *nature*, we shall find that he did not mean by it that internal frame, constitution, or condition of being wherewith God our maker hath formed us; but that external condition, or those outward circumstances (especially with relation to God and religious concerns) in which Divine Providence hath caused us to be born and live. Human nature, in our sense of the phrase, is the same in all mankind; but different persons may be brought forth into life, and spend it under very different natural circumstances, in the apostle's sense of the word *nature*. Thus Rom. ii. 14. he says, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do" by nature "the things contained in the law;" and ver. 27. "Shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, &c." He here plainly speaks not of an internal frame, constitution, or powers, or what we call a *nature*, which the Gentiles had, different from that of the Jews; but of their external, moral, and religious state and circumstances, as destitute of the instructions and assistances of the law of Moses, by which

were much below the Jews. Again, in the remonstrance which he tells us he made to Peter, we find these words, Gal. ii. 15. "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles;" when certainly he doth not mean to intimate that the Jews had a different sort of nature, or internal constitution, whereby they were Jews; but only we who are natural-born Jews, and have all along enjoyed the privileges of that people. So likewise in the text under consideration, having spoken of the Ephesians as formerly "dead in trespasses and sins, wherein, in time past, ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" he adds, ver. 3. "among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Observe, hitherto he speaks of external condition and circumstances, and of personal character and actual vices, and not at all of internal constitution, or a nature corrupted by the effects of Adam's sin. He adds: "and were by nature children of wrath, even as others," i. e. (conformable to his use of the word *nature* in other places) in consequence of our birth and situation among children of disobedience, where we were kept ignorant of the truth, deceived by false principles, and misled by bad examples, we ourselves were *children of wrath*, as others about us were, — many still continue. By *children of wrath*, I apprehend the apostle does not mean here *objects of the wrath*

wrath and displeasure of God, but only describes further the personal character of those whom he so denominates. As in the close of the former verse he had mentioned *children, or sons of disobedience*, i. e. disobedient children, (and Peter, 1 Epist. i. 14. speaks of *obedient children*, in the original it is *children of obedience*) so here he mentions *children of wrath*, i. e. wrathful, furious, malignant, and mischievous persons. In a striking and beautiful figure, he represents disobedience and wrath under the persons of two fruitful mothers, whose offspring they had been. Accordingly, when the apostle comes in the beginning of the fourth chapter to exhort the Ephesian christians to a conversation conformable to *the vocation wherewith they were called*, and quite the reverse of the description he gives in this verse of their former character and conduct, he begins with describing it thus, ver. 2, 3. "with all lowliness and meekness; with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." He also concludes the chapter thus: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you; with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Do we not see a greater propriety and force in these exhortations, when we consider them as addressed to persons who had formerly been *children of wrath*?

III. OF ELECTION AND REPROBATION.

Rom. ix. 11, &c. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," &c.

These verses, and the whole of this chapter, relate not to the election of particular persons to eternal life, but to the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews from the privileges of the gospel; and it is manifest that the apostle is not speaking in this place of the *final state*, or indeed of the *persons*, of Esau and Jacob, but of their posterity, and that only with a view to temporal privileges and prerogatives.

The whole body of christians, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, are frequently styled the *chosen* and *elect of God*, on account of their external privileges, as the whole Jewish nation had been so named before on the same account. This is an easy and plain sense of *election*, reflects not at all on the perfections of God, is consistent with the offers and exhortations of scripture,

scripture, and preserves a harmony between the language of the Old and New Testament.

It must be acknowledged; however, that in order to vindicate the divine conduct in the calling of the Gentiles, the apostle alleges some facts, in which not whole nations but *particular persons* are spoken of, and which seem to imply that their minds were under supernatural influence in forming *bad* as well as *good* resolutions; and there are other passages of scripture which at first sight seem to look the same way.

The hardness of Pharaoh's heart, Exod. ix. 16. Rom. ix. 17. the obstinacy of Sihon king of Heshbon, Deut. ii. 30. and the unbelief of many of the Jews, Isa. vi. 10. Matt. xiii. 14. Mark iv. 12. Luke viii. 10. John xii. 40. Acts xxviii. 26. Rom. xi. 8. are all ascribed to the purpose, act, or decree of God, who had important designs to answer by means of these blameable determinations of men. On the other hand, when persons believe and obey the gospel, it is ascribed to the divine influence upon their minds.

Matt. xi. 25. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." John vi. 37. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." See also John xvii. Acts xvi. 14. "And the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul." Moreover, every thing of this nature is expressly referred to the arbitrary disposition of God,

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in Rom. ix. 18, 23. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say, then, unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou, that thou repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory."

To understand such passages as these, we should consider that, in the language of the scriptures, God is said to *do* those things which come to pass according to the natural course of things, as well as to perform things of a miraculous nature; because they take place in consequence of the laws which he has originally established. And certainly, if God had not made men liable to be seduced by temptation, they would not have sinned, any more than they could embrace truth without the means of becoming acquainted with it; and it must depend upon the good pleasure of God, whether he will afford men more or fewer advantages for attaining to knowledge, virtue, and happiness. But, notwithstanding this, if the means had been such as would have been effectual, provided there

there had been no criminal prejudice to frustrate them, men are blamed, and God is just and wise in punishing them, as well as in rewarding those whose minds are so disposed as to receive advantage from the means of virtue and knowledge which are afforded them.

Now, that in this sense the sacred writers considered God as just to all mankind, is evident from the many earnest exhortations and expostulations addressed to sinners in the books of scripture, and from the blame and reproach which men are represented as incurring when they continue in vice and ignorance. It is not possible that any persons could be so inconsistent with themselves, as to exhort sinners to repent, and to blame and reproach them for not repenting, if they did not consider them as having a natural power to comply with the exhortation. Nay, in this very passage of the apostle Paul, which is, perhaps, the most favourable to the doctrine of *absolute decrees* of any thing in all the books of scripture, God is represented as "enduring, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction;" which evidently implies that they had sufficient power and time to repent, and to prevent their impending destruction; and therefore proves that their destruction was not *decreed*, but in case of their impenitence.

How much soever, therefore, the sacred writers refer to God upon particular occasions, and whatever use they may suppose that his infinite wisdom will make of the errors and vices of some individuals of mankind, in order to promote the interests of the

and virtue more at large, we cannot but conclude that they considered every man's own determination as final with respect to his future state ; and it is to be observed, that neither the obstinacy of Pharaoh nor even the infidelity of the Jews had any necessary connection with their state after death. The former might be hard-hearted with respect to the Hebrews, and either rewarded for other virtues, or punished for other vices, in a future state ; and if the unbelieving Jews were in other respects such men as Paul, who had a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge, they may find mercy in the day of judgement. There is not a single passage in the scriptures which represents the future misery of any individual of mankind as determined by an arbitrary decree of God ; but a thousand passages in which it is expressly said, that the future state of all mankind depends entirely upon their own voluntary actions.

After these observations, short remarks on another passage may suffice for the purpose of this section.

Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

All that we can fairly infer from this passage is,
that

that the end of the christian dispensation, or of the calling of mankind to the faith of the gospel, is their sanctification and future glory ; for it is manifest that *all* who are *called* are not *justified*. If this term *called* be restricted in its meaning, let it be restricted by St. Paul himself, viz. to those *who love God* ; which is sufficiently represented as depending upon men themselves, by being the subjects of precept and exhortation. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," &c.

IV. OF THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

Nothing can be more evident, from the whole tenor of the New Testament, than that the person who is distinguished by the name of the *Father* is the only true God, exclusive of the *Son*, or any other being whatever. Nevertheless, there are some single and unconnected passages, especially in our translation of the Bible, which seem to favour the contrary opinion, namely, that of the divinity of Christ. The intimate union which subsisted between God and Christ, the powers communicated to him by God, especially after his resurrection and ascension, and the distinguished honours conferred upon him, easily lead us to the genuine sense of the most considerable of these expressions, and make it evident that nothing was meant by them in the least derogatory from the sole providence and absolute supremacy of the Father.

I. Christ, being appointed the *king* and *judge* of men, has powers given him adapted to those offices.

especially a knowledge of the human heart, and the prerogative of declaring the forgiveness of sin, which always accompanies regal authority ; but being assisted by divine wisdom and discernment, as well as by divine power, in the exercise of this high office, it is in effect the same thing as the judgement and mercy of God displayed by the instrumentality of Jesus Christ. We ought not, therefore, to be surprised at such expressions as these, Matt. ix. 4. "And Jesus knowing their thoughts." John ii. 25. "He knew what was in man." Matt. ix. 2. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The multitude, who saw Christ exerting a miraculous power upon this occasion, and heard him express himself in this manner, had no idea of his claiming any extraordinary power, as *naturally inherent in himself*; for it is said, ver. 8. that "when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto men." The scribes and pharisees, indeed, said within themselves, upon this occasion, ver. 3. "This man blasphemeth." But the Jews called it *blasphemy* to pretend to be the Christ; for when the high priest solemnly adjured our Lord by the living God, Matt. xxvi. 63. that he would tell him "whether he was the Christ, the son of God," and our Lord expressly replied that he was the Christ; we read, ver. 65. "then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy."

l. ii. 9. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the head bodily." This is a very proper expression, strictly and literally true, though Christ himself

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was a mere man, since the wisdom and power of the one true God, the Father, were manifest in and acted by him, agreeably to his own declarations, that "the words which he spake were not his own, but the Father's who sent him, and that the Father within him did the works." Nay, this very expression, that the fullness of the godhead *dwelled* or *resided* in him, seems to imply that it did not naturally belong to him. Besides, phrases similar to this are applied by way of figure to christians in general. They are said to be "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. "to be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii. 19. and to "be the fullness of him, that filleth all in all," Eph. i. 13.

These observations will easily help us to understand what is meant by Christ being called "the image of the invisible God," 2 Cor. iv. 4. Col. i. 15. and "the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. and also his being "in the form of God," Phil. ii. 6. for they all allude to the divine power and wisdom which were displayed in him when he was on earth, but more especially now that he is ascended into heaven: at the same time, Christ being called only the *image* of God, is a sufficient intimation that he is not *God himself*. Indeed, if this expression was to be allowed to be any proof of the divinity of Christ, it would follow that Adam was God; for it is said, Gen. i. 26, 27. that "God made man in his own image, and after his likeness

It is with as little appearance of reason that Christ is argued to be very and eternal God, because I

style the *Son of God*; for all christians have the same appellation, 1 John iii. 2. "Now are we the sons of God." We are also called not only the *children*, but also "the heirs of God," and "joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. Adam is more especially called the "son of God," Luke iii. 18. and Ephraïmis called "his dear son," Jer. xxxi. 20.

John x. 30. "I and my Father are one." xiv. 10. "I am in the Father, and the Father in me:" that is, we are one in design and interest. But whatever be the union between the Father and the son; it is of such a kind, that his disciples are capable of it with respect to them both; for, in Christ's prayer for his disciples, he says, John xvii. 20. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.—And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

John v. 23. "That all men should honour the son, even as they honour the Father;" that is, *as well as* the Father. The same word is used, where it can have no other sense, in John xvii. 23. "And hast loved them as thou hast loved me;" that is, not in the same degree, but *likewise*. To explain the sense of the entire passage which the words above mentioned occur, let it be served, that the Jews had persecuted Jesus, because he

he had made a man whole on the sabbath day. By way of apology, he says, ver. 17. "My Father worketh hitherto," that is, in the course of his providence, on the sabbath as well as on other days, "and I work;" that is, on the sabbath day also. Upon this the pharisees were more enraged, "because he called God his Father, and because he made himself" (not "equal with God," as we render it) but *like unto God*, assuming so much of his prerogative, as to claim the privilege of working on the sabbath day as well as God. However, to show them that he meant nothing arrogant in what he had said, and that this privilege was given to him by God, he immediately replies, ver. 19. "Verily verily I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doth, these also doth the son likewise." He then proceeds to represent all his extraordinary power as the gift of his Father: ver. 20. "For the Father loveth the son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater things than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the son, that all men should honour the son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him." Indeed, this very last clause sufficiently shows that the honour to which Christ entitled is not on account of what he is, or has *himself*, but on account of what he derives from God as his ambassador.

II. Very high titles are justly given to Christ as the founder of the christian religion, and especially as superintending the affairs of his church, and as controlling whatever can affect the interest of his church. Thus the author of the epistle to the Hebrews styles him "the author and finisher of our faith." Heb. xii. 2. He is also said to be the "head over all things to his church," Eph. i. 2. These high titles are attributed to Jesus with respect to the state of glory, and universal dominion, to which he is exalted by the Father.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews makes use of a phrase of the same import with this of the apostle John, where he only means to express the unchangeableness of the doctrine of Christ, as the connection of it, with what goes before and after, makes very evident. Heb. xiii. 7. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Be not carried away with diverse and strange doctrines." The whole is intended to inculcate a steadfast adherence to the genuine doctrine of Jesus Christ.

It is plain, from many passages in the book of Revelation, that the author of it considered Christ as a person subordinate to the Father, and the minister of his will, and therefore no single expression should be interpreted in such a manner as to make it imply the contrary. The very first words of the book sufficiently express this. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God

God gave unto him." Ver. 6. "Who has made us kings and priests unto God and (or rather *even*) his Father." ii. 26. "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations—even as I received of my Father." iii. 12. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." Ver. 21. "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Further, this writer, evidently speaking of Christ in his highest capacity, uses the following expressions: ver. 14. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning (or the most excellent) of the creation of God;" which plainly implies that, how excellent soever he may be, he is but a creature.

Matt. xxviii. 29. "And lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Christ, who is constituted *head over all things* to his church, undoubtedly takes care of its interests, and attends to whatever concerns his disciples; and *being with* a person, and *taking care* of him, are, in the language of scripture, equivalent expressions. See Gen. xxi. 20, 22. xxviii. 15. xxxix. 2. Besides, Christ, having a near relation to this earth, may even be *personally present* with his disciples when they little think of it. But it is by no

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means necessary that he be personally present every where at the same time ; since God may communicate to him a power of knowing distant events, of which he appeared to be possessed when Lazarus was sick. This is certainly no greater a power than God may communicate to any of his creatures.

Another passage which seems to suppose the omnipresence of Christ is, Matt. xviii. 23. " For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But if we consider the whole of this passage, in which our Lord is speaking of the great power of which his apostles would be possessed, and especially of the efficacy of their prayers, we shall be satisfied, that he could only mean by this form of expression to represent their power with God, when they were assembled as his disciples, and prayed so as became his disciples, to be the same as his own power with God ; and God heard him always. That our Lord could not intend to speak of himself as *the God who heareth prayer*, is evident from his speaking of the Father, in this very place, as the person who was to grant their petitions, ver. 19. " Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven."

III. Considering the great power with which Christ was invested on earth, and more especially the authority to which he is exalted now that he is in heaven, it is certainly right that a very high degree of respect should be paid to him ; and from the manner in which it is

this is expressed, and especially because the word *worship* is made use of on those occasions, in our English translation, some persons have been confirmed in their opinion, that he is the proper object of supreme or divine worship, and is therefore truly and properly God; but any person who will consider the real import of the following passages must see that they afford no foundation for such a conclusion.

Heb. i. 6. "When God bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." Also the leper, Matt. viii. 2. the ruler, Matt. ix. 18. the woman of Canaan, Matt. xv. 25. the poor people in the ship, Matt. xiv. 33. and his disciples, Matt. xxviii. 9. --- 17. are all said to have *worshipped* him. But the very circumstances in which this worship was paid to Christ sufficiently prove that *divine worship* was not intended; because it is well known that the Jews had no expectation of any other person than a man for their Messiah; and when Nicodemus was convinced of the miraculous power of Jesus, he concluded, not that he was *God*, but that he must have been "impowered by God;" for he says, John iii. 2. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Besides, it is well known that the Greek word, which in the above-mentioned passages is rendered *worship*, is frequently used to express a very high degree of respect; but such as may be lawfully paid to men of a proper character and rank. And indeed our word *worship*, though it is not appropriate

appropriated to that worship which is due to God only, was formerly used with greater latitude, and even in our translation of the Bible; as when a servant, in one of our Saviour's parables, is said to have fallen down and *worshipped* his master, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all:" where certainly divine worship could not be meant. It is also an evidence of this use of the word, that in our marriage service the man is directed to say to the woman, "With my body I thee worship;" and the terms *worship* and *worshipful* are still applied to several of our magistrates and bodies of men.

Also, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the same word that we render worship in the New is frequently used where supreme worship could not be intended. Otherwise Abraham must be supposed to have intended to pay supreme worship to the angels, when he took them to be men; and to the sons of Heth, when he was making a bargain with them for a piece of ground to bury his dead.

IV. Arguments have been brought to prove the divinity of Christ from the *names* and *titles*, which are given to him, as well as from the *powers* ascribed to him, and the *worship* that is paid to him; but if we consider the proper meaning of other *scripture names*, and the occasions on which they were conferred, we must be satisfied, that very little stress is to be laid on such an argument as this.

Isaiah vii. 14. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel." Matt.

i. 23;

i. 23. "Behold; a virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us." These texts have been thought to imply that Christ is a compound being, or that he is God *incarnate*; but if we consider other instances of names imposed by the divine direction in the scriptures, we shall find that they do not always express any thing characteristic of the person on whom they are imposed, but that they were intended to be a memorial of some divine promise or assurance respecting things of a public and general concern. Thus the prophet Isaiah, vii. 1, &c. was directed to call his son *Shear Jashub*, which signifies *a remnant shall return*, to express to the Jews, that only a small number of their enemies should return from the invasion with which they then threatened them, or that a number of their own people who had been carried captive should return. Another child he was directed to call *Mahershalalhashbuz*, on a similar account; and of Jerusalem it is said, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our righteousness," to express that God would appear in that character to his people. In like manner the Divine Being, admitting that he appointed Christ to be called *Emmanuel*, might do it to engage, to manifest his own presence with his people, by protecting and blessing them, and inflicting vengeance on their enemies and oppressors. For this prediction was given upon the occasion of an invasion by the Israelites and Syrians.

Isaiah ix. 6. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a

son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace." In this, as in the former case, these titles may not express what *Christ is*, but what God will manifest himself to be in him, and by him; so that, in the dispensation of the gospel, God, the wise and benevolent author of it, will appear to be a wonderful counsellor, the everlasting father, and the prince of peace. If this name be supposed to characterize Christ himself, it will by no means favour the common doctrine of the Trinity; because it will make him to be the *Father*, or the first person, and not the *Son*, or the second person. Besides, whatever powers or dignities are to be possessed by Christ, it is sufficiently intimated in this place, that he does not hold them *independent* and *underived*; since he himself, and all the blessings which he bestows, are said to be *given*, that is, by God; and at the conclusion of the prophecy, in the next verse, it is said, that the "zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." I would also observe, that that part of the title on which the greatest stress has been laid may be rendered "the mighty God my father for ever, or the mighty God is my father for ever," which is exactly agreeable to many declarations of the scripture concerning Christ, and his usual title of "the son of God;" and to this the angel, in his salutation of Mary, might probably allude, when he said, Luke i. 32. "He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the highest;" and it is very observable, that
what

what he adds corresponds most remarkably with the remainder of this very prophecy of Isaiah. The prophet says, ver. 7. "Of the increase of his government, and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgement and with justice, from henceforth even for ever." The angel says, "He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

V. Many of the texts which are usually alleged in proof of the divinity of Christ, relate to God the Father only. One of the most remarkable of these is John i. 1. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and

and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

These words, interpreted in the most literal manner, only imply that *the word*, or Christ, had a being before the creation of the world; that he had the title of *God*, or of a *God*, and was the instrument by whom the supreme God made all things; but they by no means imply that he was true and very God; for magistrates and others are sometimes called gods, on account of their power and dominion, in which they resemble God. Nay the derivation of Christ from the Father, and consequently his dependence upon him, is sufficiently expressed by his being called, in the last of these verses, "the only begotten of the Father."

To me, however, it appears, that the apostle does not speak of the pre-existence of Christ in this place; but only of the power and wisdom of God, which dwelled or tabernacled in his flesh; and that he probably meant to condemn some false opinions concerning the *logos* (which is the Greek for *word*) which are known to have prevailed in his time. Now, in contradiction to them, the apostle here asserts, that by the *word of God* we are not to understand any being distinct from God, but only the *power or energy of God*, which is so much *with God*, that it properly belongs to his nature, and is not at all distinct from God himself; and that the same power which produced all things was manifest to men in the person of Jesus Christ, who was sent to enlighten the world; that though his power made the world, it was not acknowledged

ledged by the world, when it was revealed in this manner, not even by God's peculiar people, the Jews ; and notwithstanding this power was manifested in a more sensible and constant manner than ever it had been before, dwelling in human flesh, and tabernacling, or abiding some considerable time among us ; so that his glory was beheld, or made visible to mortal eyes, and was full of grace and truth.

Rom. ix. 5. " Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." This may with equal propriety and truth be rendered, *God, who is over all, be blessed for ever*, the former sentence ending with the word *came* ; and since no ancient manuscripts are pointed, all the pointings have been made and the different sentences have been distinguished as fallible men have thought the best sense required. It affords an argument favourable to my construction of these words, that it is usual with the apostle Paul to break out into a doxology, or form of thanksgiving to God, after mentioning any remarkable instance of his goodness. See Eph. iii. 21. 1 Tim. i. 17. vi. 16. See also 1 Pet. iv. 11. Indeed, it is very common in Jewish writings to add a doxology after barely mentioning the name of God.

1 John v. 20. " And we know that the son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." This last clause is manifestly explanatory of the title *him that is true*, or *the true one*.

in the preceding clauses, of whom the son of God has given us an understanding, or with whom he has made us acquainted. As the word *even* is a mere addition of our translators, instead of *we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ*, we may read, *We are in him that is true, in or by his son Jesus Christ*; and this makes a far more consistent sense, and may be considered as an allusion to the words of Christ addressed to the Father, and recorded by this very apostle. John xvii. 3. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Without this interpretation these two texts would flatly contradict one another; for how can the Father be *the only true God*, if the son be true God also?

1 Cor. i. 23, 24. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." The meaning of this plainly is, that the power and wisdom of God were displayed in this very circumstance of the crucifixion of Christ, which was such a stumbling-block, and appeared so foolish to men; agreeably to what he immediately adds, "for the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." That which the Jews and Greeks had rejected, as foolish and weak, was in reality, and appeared to those who were *called*, and who were taught to understand it better, to surpass the wisdom and power of man.

Tit.

Tit. ii. 13. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." In this place God and Christ are mentioned as distinct persons, the judgement of the world being sometimes ascribed to the one, and sometimes to the other; which is easily accounted for by considering that, in that great day, Christ acts by commission from God, and will come in the glory of his Father, and of the holy angels, as well as in his own glory, upon that most solemn occasion.

John xx. 28. "Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord, and my God." This is an abrupt exclamation, and no connected sentence at all, and seems to have proceeded from a conviction, suddenly produced in the apostle's mind, that he who stood before him was, indeed, his Lord and master, raised to life by the power of God. The resurrection of Christ and the power of God had so near a connection, that a conviction of the one could not but be attended with an acknowledgement of the other; and therefore they are frequently mentioned together, the one as the *cause*, and the other as the *effect*. Rom. i. 4. "Declared to be the son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. vi. 4. "Raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." x. 9. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thine heart, that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Here we plainly see, that he only who raised Christ from the dead is styled *God*, and not Christ, who was raised by his power.

1 Tim. vi. 13, &c. "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting, amen." The meaning of this passage, as the construction of the words in the original incontestably proves, is as follows; *which appearing*, or second coming of Christ to judge the world, he who is the blessed and only potentate, that is, the only true God, the Father, shall show, or declare. And this exactly agrees with what our Lord himself says, that the day and hour of this his appearing was not known either to the angels of God, or to himself, but to the Father only; and consequently he only could show, or declare it. Besides, the very verses I quoted above sufficiently demonstrate, that the writer of them considered God and Christ as distinct persons. "I charge thee in the sight of God and before Jesus Christ;" and how could he with truth say of Christ, that "no man had seen him, or could see him?"

Heb. i. 10. "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth," &c. As there are several expressions in the first part of this chapter, which are not easy to be understood, I shall give a
brief

brief explanation of them all, in their order. The great objection which the Jews made to christianity being the meanness of Christ's appearance, and the ignominious death that he suffered ; to obviate this, the author of this epistle begins with representing the great dignity to which, for the suffering of death, Christ is now exalted at the right hand of God. Having said that " God, in these last days, had spoken to us by his son," he immediately adds, ver. 2. " whom he hath appointed heir," or lord, " of all things;" by whom also he made, or appointed, not the material *worlds*, but *the ages* ; that is, the present dispensation of God's government over mankind, which is established by the gospel, the administration of which is committed to the Son : " Who being the brightness of his (that is, God's) glory, and the express image of his (that is, God's) person, and upholding all things by the word of his (that is, God's) power, &c. sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." It is plain from this passage, that whatever Christ is he is by divine appointment, *whom he APPOINTED heir of all things.*

Afterwards this writer proceeds to prove that Christ is superior to angels, and at the close of this argument he has these words, " but concerning the son he says, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ;" or, as it may be rendered, ' God is thy throne for ever and ever ; that is, God will establish the authority of Christ till time shall be no more ; " a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righte-

ousness

ousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." From this passage nothing can be more plain, than that, whatever authority belongs to Christ, he has a superior, from whom he derives it; "God, even thy God, has anointed thee." This could never have been said of the one true God, whose being and power are underived.

In verses 10, 11, 12, the apostle quotes an address to God, as the great Creator and everlasting Ruler of the universe, but without any hint of its being applied to Christ, from Psalm cii. 25—27. "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." This quotation was probably made with a view to express the great honour conferred on Christ on account of the dignity of the person who conferred it. For it immediately follows, ver. 13. "But to which of the angels said he," that is, the great Being to whom this description belongs, "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" Or, since this quotation from the Psalmist describes a perpetuity of empire in God, it may be intended to intimate a perpetuity of empire in Christ, who holds his authority from God, and who must hold it, unless God himself be unable to support it.

Acts

Acts xx. 28. "Feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." In the most ancient manuscripts this text is, "Feed the church of the Lord;" which generally signifies Christ. Also in some copies it is, "which he purchased with blood;" that is, the blood of his Son. As the *blood of God* is a phrase which occurs no where else in the scriptures, we ought to be exceedingly cautious how we admit such an expression. If Christ was God, his blood could not be his blood as God, but as man.

VI. I shall here introduce a few texts, which are not reducible to any of the above-mentioned heads; being either interpolations or mis-translations of the scriptures, or having no relation to the subject in favour of which they have been quoted.

Matt. xxviii. 19. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This form of baptism seems to be intended to remind Christians of the different parts which God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit acted in the scheme of man's redemption; God sending his Son on this gracious errand; the Son faithfully performing the work which God gave him to do, and being made head over all things to the church; and the Holy Spirit confirming the word of truth by miraculous gifts. But it is quite an arbitrary supposition, that, because they are mentioned together upon this occasion, they must be equal in all other respects, partaking of divinity alike, so as to be equal in power and glory. The apostle Paul says, 1 Cor. x. 2. "that
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the children of Israel were baptized unto Moses :” but he certainly did not mean that Moses was their God.

Col. iii. 10. “ And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him ; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Seythian, bond, nor free ; but Christ is all, and in all ;” that is, there is no other distinction to be made now, but only whether a man be a real christian.

1 Cor. i. 2. “ With all that in all places call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours.” That adoration, such as is due to the one living and true God, was not meant by the apostle in this place, is evident from the very next words : “ Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ ;” where Christ is evidently spoken of as distinct from God. It is probable, therefore, that the apostle meant nothing more than such as call themselves by the name of Christ, or who professed christianity.

Acts vii. 59. “ And they stoned Stephen calling upon God, and saying Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” The word *God* is not in the original, as our translators have signified, by their directing it to be printed in the Italic character ; so that this text by no means implies that Stephen acknowledged Christ to be God, but only informs us, that Stephen addressed himself to Christ, whom he had just seen in person in a state of great exaltation and glory : as we read, ver. 55, 56. “ He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked steadfastly into

into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the son of man standing on the right hand of God." This very language clearly implies, that he considered the *son of man*, and *God*, as distinct persons.

The word which is here, and in 1 Cor. i. 2. rendered to *call upon*, is far from being appropriated to *invocation*, as peculiar to the Divine Being. It is the same word that is rendered to *appeal to*, as when Paul appeals to Cæsar; and is used when a person is said to be called by any particular name; as, Judas, *called* Iscariot, &c. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that it has the same meaning both in 1 Cor. i. 2. and also in Acts ix. 21. "Is not this he that destroyed them who called on this name in Jerusalem?" that is, all who called themselves *christians*. It is so rendered, James ii. 7. "Do they not blaspheme the worthy name by which ye are called?" or, as it is more exactly rendered, *which is called*, or imposed, *upon you*? that is, by which ye are distinguished. Had it implied *adoration*, it would at least have been *which is called upon by you*.

1 John v. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." Sir Isaac Newton and others have clearly proved that this verse was no part of John's original epistle, but was inserted in later ages. It is not to be found in any ancient manuscript, and has been omitted in many printed copies and translations of the New Testament, at a time when

the doctrine which it is supposed to contain was in a manner universally received. I say *supposed to contain*, because in fact it expresses no more than that these three agree in giving the same testimony, which is the only kind of union which the *spirit*, the *water*, and the *blood*, in the verse following can have.

1 Tim. iii. 16. "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Sir Isaac Newton has fully demonstrated that, in the original, this text was not *God* manifest in the flesh, but *who* was manifest in the flesh, and a very small alteration in the manner of writing Greek is sufficient for that purpose. The oldest manuscript in the world, which I have examined myself, has been manifestly altered from the one to the other, as appears by the difference in the colour of the ink. Besides, it is even literally true, that God was manifest in the flesh of Christ; since he himself acknowledges, that "the very words which he spake were not his own, but the Father's who sent him, and that the Father, who was in him, did the works." It was therefore with the greatest propriety that our Lord said, John viii. 29. "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also," the wisdom and power of God being conspicuous in him. They who will have this text to be a proof of the godhead of Christ, must suppose him to be the *Father*, or the first person in the Trinity, and not the *Son*, or the second.

Zech. xiii. 7. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd

herd and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." So says our English version; but the word in the original signifies a person that is *near*, or *joined in neighbourhood* to another; and except this single text, it is every where rendered *neighbour* by our translators.

Philip. ii. 5, &c. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation;—Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.—That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The proper rendering of this text is, *Who being in the form of God, did not think that being equal to God, or a state of equality with God, was a thing to be seized* (i. e. by him), *but made himself of no reputation.* This makes the whole passage perfectly just and coherent, as a recommendation of humility, and also hints a fine contrast between the conduct of Christ, whom St. Paul elsewhere calls the *second Adam*, and the first, who is also said to have been made *in the likeness of God*; but aspiring to be *as God*, fell, and was punished; whereas Christ, who had more of the likeness or *form of God*, on account of his extraordinary powers, not grasping at any thing higher, but humbling himself, was exalted. It is in this sense, or a sense similar to it, in which this very text is quoted by those fathers of the Christian church who wrote before the controversy about the divinity of Christ was started. In this manner, even some
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who maintain the divinity of Christ render the words. Thus, Father Simon, who contends that being in the form of God, is equivalent to being truly God, renders the latter part of the verse, *did not imperiously assume to himself an equality with God*. Indeed the word *but*, which introduces the next verse, evidently leads us to expect some contrast between what goes before and after it, which is very striking in the manner in which I translate this text ; but it is altogether lost in our common version. "For he made himself equal to God, but humbled himself," is not even sense. Lastly, I would observe that the word which is here rendered *equal to*, is also used to express a very high degree of resemblance, which it is very certain that Christ was possessed of with respect to God ; and Dr. Doddridge renders it, *to be as God*.

VII. Christ may be supposed to have *pre-existed*, or to have had a being before he was born of the virgin Mary, without supposing him to be the eternal God : but it appears to me that the apostles considered Christ as being, with respect to his *nature*, truly and properly *a man*, consisting of the same constituent parts, and of the same rank with ourselves, *in all things like unto his brethren* ; and the texts which are thought to speak of him as having existed before he came into this world, appear to me to bear other interpretations very well. Some of them have been explained in a different sense already, and I shall now endeavour to explain the rest.

John viii. 56, &c. "Your father Abraham rejoiced
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to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was I am." The meaning of this passage clearly is, that Abraham *foresaw* the day of Christ, and that Christ was the subject of prophecy before the times of Abraham. This saying of our Lord is also illustrated by what the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says concerning all the ancient worthies, viz. that "they all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." In this manner, therefore, Abraham also *saw* the day of Christ. Agreeably to this it is easy to explain John xvii. 5. "Glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," of the glory which was intended for him in the councils of God before all time. Nay, this must necessarily be our Lord's meaning in this place; since in many other passages the power and glory which were conferred upon Christ are expressly said to be the reward of his obedience, and to be subsequent to his resurrection from the dead. It is with peculiar propriety, therefore, that this request of our Lord follows his declaration that he had done the work for which he was to receive the reward; ver. 4. "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me," &c. As the connection of this prayer shows that, whatever it was that our Lord requested, it depended upon the part which he had

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had to act in the world, it is plain that it could not be any thing which he had enjoyed antecedently to his coming into it.

In the same manner we may explain the following prophecy of Micah concerning Christ, v. 2. "Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be a ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." For this may be understood concerning the promises of God, in which the coming of Christ was signified to mankind from the beginning of the world. The Chaldee paraphrase renders it, "whose name was foretold of old."

As to those who think that our Lord meant to intimate that he was truly and properly God because he uses that expression *I am*, by which the true God announced himself to Moses, they will perhaps be sensible how little stress is to be laid upon it, when they are informed, that, though the same phrase occurs very often in the history of Christ, our translators themselves, in every place excepting this, render it by *I am he*, that is, I am the Christ. It is used in this sense in the 24th verse of this chapter, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." And again in the 28th verse, "When ye shall lift up the son of man, then shall ye know that I am he." That the words *I am* in this place do not mean the eternal God, is manifest from the words which are immediately connected with these; "then shall ye know that I am he,

he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught me I speak these things."

John xvi. 28. "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." In order to understand this text, it should be observed, that by *the world* is not always meant *the material world*, and least of all in the discourses of our Saviour; but the world considered as a *state of trial, exercise and discipline*, and especially the unbelieving and ungodly part of the world. "The world shall hate you," John xv. 10. "I pray not for the world," xvii. 9, &c. Our Saviour also speaks of sending his disciples into the world; though, considered as a part of the material system, they had been in it long before. John xvii. 18. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so also send I them into the world." Since, therefore, the mission of Christ, and that of the apostles, are spoken of in the very same words, and represented as commencing in the same manner, there can be no more reason to suppose that Christ had a being before he came into the world, than there is to suppose that the apostles had pre-existed. Also when our Lord says, John xvii. 11. "Now I am no more in the world," he could not mean the material world: for, after his resurrection, he was seen by many, and even after his ascension he was seen by Paul, if not by Stephen; and he is probably in this world at present, attending to the affairs of his church; and therefore may even be literally *with his disciples*, upon important occasions, *even to the end of the world*;
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and the notion of a *local heaven*, above the clouds, is altogether fanciful.

John v. 13. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man, who is in heaven." This language is evidently figurative; but if Christ could be in heaven at the same time that he was on earth, conversing with Nicodemus, it is plain that his being said to have come down from heaven, cannot necessarily imply that he had ever been any where but on the earth. In fact, the phrases *being in heaven*, *being with God*, or *in the bosom of God*, &c. express a state of very intimate communication with God, such as qualified Christ to speak of heavenly things, as he expresses himself to Nicodemus, and to make his Father known to us. John i. 8. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

The omnipresence, and consequently the proper divinity of Christ, could not be meant by his being said to be in heaven at the same time that he was visible on earth, because he is, on this occasion, called *the son of man*, which is always allowed to denote his *humanity*, and which certainly could not be present in two places at the same time.

John vi. 51. "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the

son

son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." By these and other expressions of a similar nature, our Lord staggered not only those who followed him for the sake of the *loaves* with which he had fed them, but even many of his other disciples; and perceiving this, he says unto them, ver. 61. "Doth this offend you, what and if ye shall see the son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." In this our Lord seems to be reproving the stupidity of his disciples, in not understanding that by *himself*, and *his flesh and blood*, he meant his *doctrine*, which came down from heaven. For if it was his *body* that was to be of such benefit to mankind, what would they say if they should see it taken from them, ascending into heaven, from whence he had spoken of its descending to be the life of the world? They must then be satisfied that his *flesh* could profit them nothing, and therefore must conclude that his *doctrine* must have been the *spirit, and the life*, of which he spake. Or we may, perhaps, understand our Saviour, in this place, as referring to his ascension, which was an ocular proof of his having had that intimate communication with God, and having been sent of God, concerning which he had been speaking. Besides, if this passage be interpreted literally, it will imply that the *body* of Christ came from heaven; which is not pretended.

Col. i. 15, "Who is the image of the invisible God,
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the first-born of every creature. For by him were **all things** created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist: and he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell."

In this passage we have a view given us of the great dignity and dominion to which Christ is exalted by his Father, and of the great and happy change that was made in this world by his gospel; for by *creation* we are to understand *the new creation*, or *renovation*, in which sense the same word is used by the apostle when he says, "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Eph. ii. 10. So great a change is produced in the world, in the tempers and conduct of men, by the gospel, that both the terms *creation* and *regeneration* are made use of to express it. "Verily verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3.; so that by *regeneration*, or *new creation*, we are to understand a *new modelling* or *new constituting*. We shall see less harshness in this figure, when we consider, that what is called the *Mosaic creation* was probably similar to this; since, for any thing we know, it was only the *re-making* or *re-constituting* of the world out of a former chaos.

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There are several passages in which the words which we generally render to *create*, or *creation*, signify only a *renewal*, or *restoration*. Eph. ii. 10. "To make in himself, of twain, one new man, so making peace." 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." In 1 Pet. ii. 13. the same word is rendered *ordinance*. "Be ye subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." The places in which the influence of the gospel is termed a new creation, are illustrated by the following prophecy of Isaiah, in which it is described in the same language, Isaiah lxxv. 17, &c. "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."

The word *all* must necessarily respect the subject concerning which the affirmation is made, and be limited by it. Thus, when *all the world* is said to be taxed, Luke ii. 1. it is plain that nothing but the *Roman empire* could be understood. In like manner, when *all things* are said to be created by Christ, or for him, and also when *all things* are said to be *subject to him*, or *put under his feet*, nothing can be meant but such things as can properly come under his government as the Messiah, and be subservient to him in the conduct of it, including probably the *visible* powers and kingdoms of this world, and the *invisible* administration of angels; and therefore the apostle, with great propriety, concludes and sums up the whole of Christ's authority,

thority, by saying that *he is the head of the body the church.*

Before often signifies before in point of *rank* and *pre-eminence*, and not in point of *time*; so that when Christ is said to be *before all things*, the meaning is, that he is the *chief*, or *most excellent* of all. And when it is said that *in him all things consist*, we are to understand that in him all things are *completed* and *compact*; since the Christian dispensation is the last and most perfect of all, completing one great and regular scheme of revelation, continually advancing from the more imperfect to the more perfect. I would further observe, that the things here said to be created by Christ are not *material things*, as the *heaven*, and the *earth*, but things *in heaven* and *earth*, as *thrones*, *principalities*, &c. and therefore are naturally interpreted, of that *power* and *dignity* to which he is advanced, and which is denoted by God's giving him *all power in heaven and on earth*, after his resurrection.

We shall have a clearer understanding of this passage in the epistle to the Colossians, if we compare it with a parallel passage in the epistle of the same apostle to the Ephesians, i. 17. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom, that ye may know—the exceeding greatness of his power,—which he wrought in Christ Jesus when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world,

world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." In this passage we see most clearly that all the power and authority to which Christ is advanced is subsequent to his resurrection.

The origin and extent of the power of Christ are also most distinctly expressed, Phil. ii. 8.—11. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

To the same purpose also, 1 Peter i. 20, 21. "Who (Christ) verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times, for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." I should think it hardly possible to read this single passage with attention, and not see that the writer of it considered Christ as a being distinct from God, and subordinate to him: that all his glory was subsequent to his resurrection; and also that, though he was *foreordained before the foundation of the world*, he was *not manifested*, or brought into being, till *these last times*, or those of the gospel.

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There are some other passages in the New Testament, which are similar to those which I have quoted above, and may serve to illustrate them. John xvi. 15. "All things that the Father hath are mine." xvii. 10. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." 1 Cor. viii. 6. "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

That there is nothing in any of the passages which I have now quoted, that implies any proper divinity in Christ, is sufficiently evident, even without the addition of such expressions as directly assert the contrary; as when the apostle Paul says, that "to us there is one God, even the Father;" and our Saviour calls his Father *the only true God*. To signify that the authority of Christ is not underived, like that of God; and at the same time to inform us from whence it does proceed, the apostle says, that "it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." In the very same language our Saviour speaks of his disciples, "Fear not, little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

V. OF THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

THE death of Christ being an event of the greatest consequence to the end of his coming into the world, and being, at the same time, the great *stumbling-block* both to the Jews and the Gentiles, who could not easily reconcile themselves to the notion of a *suffering Saviour*,

Saviour, it is no wonder that the writers of the New Testament speak much of it, and represent it in a great variety of lights, and especially such as would appear the most favourable to the Christian converts. In this case we naturally expect bold comparisons and allusions, especially considering how much more figurative is the style of the books of scripture, and indeed of all oriental writings, than ours. But in whatever lights the sacred writers represent the death of Christ, there is resemblance enough sufficiently to justify the representation, at the same time that this event being compared to *so many things*, and things of such *different natures*, proves that the resemblance in all of them is only in *certain respects*, and that they differ considerably in others.

For example, the death of Christ is compared to a *sacrifice* in general, because he gave up his life in the cause of virtue and of God, and more especially a *sacrifice for sin*, because his death and resurrection were necessary to the confirmation of that gospel by which sinners are brought to repentance, and thereby reconciled to God. It is called a *curse*, because he died in a state of suspension, which was by the Jews appropriated to those persons who were considered as reprobated by God; and it is called a *passover*, because it may be considered as a sign of our deliverance from the power of sin, as the passover among the Jews was a sign of their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. It is also called a *ransom*, because we are delivered by the gospel from sin and misery. On the same account, he

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is said by his death, *to bear, or take away, our sins*, since his gospel delivers us from the power of sin, and consequently from the punishment due to it.

These are all bold but significant figures of speech, the death of Christ really corresponding to them all to a certain degree ; but they differ so very widely from one another, that no one thing can correspond to any of them throughout ; for then it must exclude all, or at least most of the rest. The same thing, for instance, could not be a curse and a sacrifice ; because every thing accursed was considered as an abomination in the sight of God, and could never be brought to the altar ; and the killing of the paschal lamb was a thing essentially different from a sacrifice for sin :

These observations appear to me to be a sufficient guide to the interpretation of all the language of the New Testament respecting the death of Christ, without supposing that it had any proper influence upon God, so as to render him propitious to his offending creatures, or that it made it consistent with the divine justice to forgive the sins of mankind ; which is contrary to a thousand plain and express declarations of scripture, which represent God as being essentially, and of himself, merciful and gracious, without the least reference to any other being or agent whatever, and as forgiving *freely*, and gratuitously, upon our repentance and amendment, without any other atonement or satisfaction. I shall therefore content myself with reciting a few of the passages in which the death of Christ is represented in these several lights.

Eph.

Eph. v. 2. "Christ also has loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, of a sweet-smelling savour." Heb. vii. 27. "Who needed not daily to offer sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people. For this he did once, when he offered up himself." With the same idea he says, ix. 22. "And without shedding blood there is no remission." This view of the death of Christ occurs pretty frequently in this epistle to the Hebrews, but not more than about half a dozen times in all the other books of the New Testament; the principal of which is 1 John ii. 1. "And he is the propitiation for our sins." But if the great object of the death of Christ was the establishment of that religion by which the world is reformed, in consequence of which the Divine Being is rendered propitious to them, how natural is it to represent his death as a *sacrifice* to God, for that great purpose! Besides, sacrifices for sin under the law of Moses are never considered as standing in the place of the sinner; but as the people were never to approach the divine presence, upon any occasion, without some *offering*, agreeable to the standing and universal custom of the East, with respect to all sovereigns and great men, so no person after being unclean (which not only moral guilt, but a number of things absolutely indifferent to morality were supposed to render a man) could be introduced to the tabernacle or temple service, without an offering proper to the occasion.

This idea may explain 2 Cor. v. 21. "He made
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him

him sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him ;" because by *sin*, in this place, may perhaps be understood a *sin-offering*. Or it may correspond to Romans viii. 3. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak, through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" (on account of sin, or on the business of sin, i. e. to destroy and take it away) "condemned sin in the flesh." In this case, the sense of the passage will be, that Christ was made, not *sin*, but *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that is, he was made a *man* for our sakes.

Many persons are carried away by the sound of the word *redemption*, as if it necessarily implied that, mankind being in a state of bondage, a price must be paid for their freedom, and that the death of Christ was that price. But the word which we render *redemption* signifies only *deliverance* in general, in whatever manner it be effected, and it is frequently so rendered by our translators. Belonging to this class of texts are the following, Matt. xx. 28. Mark x. 45. "The son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." 1 Tim. ii. 8. "Who gave himself a ransom for all."

In order to judge of the meaning of this expression, let the preceding passages be compared with the following, in which the same Greek word is used : Luke xxiv. 21. "We trusted that it had been he who should have delivered (or, as it might have been translated, *redeemed*) Israel." In this case, the disciples certainly meant

meant a deliverance, or redemption, from a state of subjection to the Romans, which they could not suppose was to be effected by *purchase*, but by the exertion of wisdom and power. Luke i. 68. "He has visited and redeemed his people;" which is explained in ver. 71. by "a deliverance from our enemies, and from the hands of all that hate us." In Acts vii. 35. Stephen styles Moses a *ruler and deliverer*, or *redeemer*, but what price did he pay for their redemption? In the Old Testament also God is frequently said to have *redeemed* Israel from the hand of the Egyptians; but he certainly did not redeem them by paying any price for their redemption, and much less by becoming a bondman in their place: but, as it is often expressed, he redeemed, or delivered them, with *an high hand and an out-stretched arm*. So also may Christ be said to redeem, or deliver from sin, viz. by his precepts, by his example, and by the precious promises of his gospel; by the consideration of which we are induced to forsake sin.

Stress has been laid upon the word *for* in the above-mentioned passages, as if Christ dying a ransom *for* all necessarily implied that he died *in the stead*, or *in the place*, of all; but the same word has other significations, as *because of*, and so it is rendered Luke i. 20. "Because thou hast not believed my word." Heb. xii. 2. "Who *for* (or because of) the joy that was set before him." It also signifies *on the behalf*, or *on the account of*, as Matt. xvii. 27. "That take, and give them for thee and me," that is, *on the account of*, not

instead-of, me and thee. So Christ died, and gave his life a ransom, not instead of many, but *on the behalf of many*, or *for their benefit*.

Much stress has also been laid on Christ being said to *bear the sins of mankind*; as if they had been ascribed or imputed to him, and he had taken them upon himself, and suffered the wrath of God for them. Is. liii. 11. "He shall bear their iniquities." 1 Pet. ii. 24. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body, on the tree." Heb. ix. 28. "So Christ once suffered, to bear the sins of many."

These, I think, are all the places in which this particular view of the death of Christ occurs. But, beside the manifest injustice, and indeed absurdity, of an innocent person being punished for one that is guilty, the word does not signify to *bear or take upon another*, but to *bear away*, or to *remove*, by whatever means; so that the texts above mentioned correspond to 1 John iii. 5, 6. "And ye know that he was manifest to take away sin, and in him was no sin."

The phrase *bearing sin* is never applied in the Old Testament but to the *scape-goat*, which was not sacrificed, but turned loose into the wilderness, to signify the removal of the sins of the people, which God had freely forgiven, to a place where they should never more be heard of. The goat itself, which was emblematically said to *bear* their sins, suffered nothing in consequence of it; but, as its name imports, was suffered to *escape*, or was let loose. Perhaps the sending away of the scape-goat was intended for a monitory sign

sign to the people, that they should cease to commit those sins which had been so solemnly confessed over him, and which he was said to "bear away into a land of separation." See Levit. xvi. 22. in the margin.

The evangelist Matthew had, most evidently, this idea of the meaning of the passage in Isaiah, when he applied it upon the occasion of Christ's healing the bodily diseases of men, viii. 17. For he says that he performed these cures, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Now how did Christ *bear* the bodily diseases which he cured? Not, surely, by taking them upon himself, and becoming diseased, as the poor wretches themselves had been; but by *removing* them by his miraculous power. In like manner, Christ *bears* or *takes away* sin in general; not by suffering himself to be treated as a sinner, but removing it by the doctrines and motives of his gospel. Agreeably to this, when Peter had said, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," he explains his meaning in the words next following; "that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness."

Christ is said to die *a curse* for us, in Gal. iii. 10. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now it is proper enough to say, that Christ died *a curse*; because the manner of his death was similar to that by which those who were deemed *cursed* under the law were put to death. But if by *accursed* we mean lying under the displeasure

displeasure of God, this was so far from being the case with respect to Christ and his death, that in this very circumstance he was the object of the divine approbation and complacency in the highest degree; as he himself says, "For this reason does my Father love me, because I lay down my life:" and it is a general observation in the scriptures, that "precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints."

Christ is called *a passover*, in 1 Cor. v. 7. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:" and this view is also alluded to when it is said, "a bone of him shall not be broken." The reason of this view of the death of Christ was sufficiently intimated before.

As a proof that Christ took our sins upon him, and that we, on the other hand, are justified by the *imputation of his righteousness to us*, some allege, Jer. xxiii. 56. "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**" But, according to the method of interpreting scripture names, explained above, all that we can infer from this text is, that God will be our Righteousness, or receive us into his grace and favour by means of Christ, or by the gospel of Christ. That we must understand this text in some such sense as this, is evident from the same name being afterwards applied to Jerusalem, Jer. xxxiii. 16. "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS:**" for certainly it cannot be thought that the merits of Jerusalem are imputed to mankind.

Many divines, finding themselves obliged to give up the notion of Christ's suffering *in our stead*, and
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our being justified by his righteousness, as contrary to the genuine sense of the scriptures, allege, however, that God forgives the sins of mankind *on account of the merit of Christ, and his intercession for us*; and this opinion, like the former, is favoured by the literal sense of a few passages of scripture; but it is contrary to the general and plain tenor of it, which represents all acts of mercy as proceeding from the essential placability and goodness of God the Father only. Besides, there are many passages in the Old Testament in which God is represented as forgiving the Israelites, and receiving them into his favour, on the account of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and their posterity plead the merit of these their religious ancestors in their prayers. God is also represented as ready to forgive the people of Sodom at the intercession of Abraham. Admitting, therefore, that God may grant favours to mankind at the intercession of Christ, this is not a privilege *peculiar* to Christ, but is common to him and other good men who went before him; so that the *general system*, of the forgiveness of sin, can by no means depend upon the merit and intercession of Christ only.

The following passages seem to represent the Divine Being as dispensing mercy to mankind on the account of Christ, 1 John ii. 12. "Because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Rom. viii. 34. "Who also maketh intercession for us." 1 Cor. vi. 11. "But ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus." Heb. vii. 25. "He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

But,

But let these passages be compared with the following from the Old Testament, Gen. xxvii. 24. "Fear not, I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake." Moses, pleading in behalf of the Israelites, says, Exod. xxxii. 13. "Remember Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel, thy servants." Deut. xix. 27. "Remember thy servants, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Look not to the stubbornness of this people, nor to their sin." There are many other passages to the same purpose with these.

It must also be observed, that *in the name of Christ*, which occurs in some of the above-mentioned passages, means *as Christ*, or *in the place of Christ*. Thus our Lord says, *Many shall come in my name*, that is, pretending to be what I am, the Messiah; and again, *the Comforter, whom the Father shall send in my name*, that is, in *my place*, as it were, to succeed me in his kind offices to you. Praying, therefore, *in the name of Christ* may mean, in allusion to this sense of it, praying with the temper and disposition of Christ, or as becomes christians, those who follow the directions of Christ, both with respect to prayer and every other duty of the christian life. So also being *justified in the name of Christ* may signify our being justified, or approved of God, in consequence of our being christians, in deed and in truth, having the same mind that was also in Christ Jesus. Agreeably to this, the apostle Paul exhorts us *to put on Christ*, as if it were to appear like him, the very same person.

If the pardon of sin had universally depended upon
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the *advocateship* of Christ only, it can hardly be supposed that the Spirit would have had that name given to him, and especially by way of eminence and distinction; for the word which we render *comforter* is the same that is rendered *advocate* in 1 John ii. 1. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The spirit is also said to intercede for us, Rom. viii. 26. "The spirit itself maketh intercession for us."

Besides, the passages in which any regard is supposed to be had to the merit or intercession of Christ, in dispensing mercy to sinners, are exceedingly few, in comparison with those which represent this *free gift* as proceeding from God only; and in some of them we are misled by our translation, as in Eph. iv. 32. "And be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has freely forgiven you." It ought to have been rendered *as God in Christ*, that is, in the gospel of Christ, has forgiven you. Besides, the word which is here rendered *forgive* signifies *conferring favours* in general, and not the forgiveness of sin in particular; and the whole passage was intended to inculcate a benevolent disposition, in imitation of God, who had conferred the most valuable favours upon mankind, in the gospel of Christ.

Many passages in which we are said to be *justified by faith*, and not by *the works of the law*, were intended to oppose the doctrine of the Jews, who maintained that the observance of the law of Moses was absolutely

necessary to salvation. Writing upon this subject, the apostle Paul expresses himself in the following manner, Rom. iii. 21, &c. "But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe, for there is no difference. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law."

If we consider the whole of this passage, and the connection in which it stands, we shall be satisfied, that the apostle is here asserting that, in the gospel of Christ, which was confirmed by his death and resurrection, the Divine Being, as from a *mercy seat*, (which the word ought to be rendered, and not *propitiation*,) declares his godness and mercy to mankind; and since the patriarchs, who believed and obeyed before the law, were justified without the works of the law, so God, acting still upon the same maxims, is just, and the Jews have no reason to complain of it, when
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he justifies sinners who believe and obey, *freely*, and *without the works of the law of Moses*, under the gospel.

N. B. I do not pretend that this pamphlet contains an illustration of *all* the texts that have been urged in favour of the doctrines which are controverted in the *Appeal*; for then I must have written a commentary upon the *whole Bible*, as there is hardly a text in which some persons do not imagine that they see their own peculiar sentiments; but I think I have taken notice of all that can well be said to be of *much consequence*. If any considerable omission be pointed out to me, it shall be supplied in future editions.

A PRAYER,

RESPECTING THE PRESENT STATE OF CHRISTIANITY.

ALMIGHTY GOD, the giver of all good, and especially the *Father of lights*, and the fountain of all wisdom and knowledge; we thank thee that *thou hast put a spirit in man, and that thine inspiration giveth us understanding*; that, being formed after thine own image, we find ourselves possessed of a nature superior to that of brute creatures; and, being endowed with the faculty of reason, are capable of investigating important truth, and of governing our conduct so as to attain to very distinguished degrees of excellence and happiness.

We thank thee that, in aid of this *light of nature*,
thou

thou hast superadded the gift of *revelation*; having, from time to time, communicated to mankind, by thy servants the prophets, the most useful information concerning thy nature, perfections and government, concerning our duty here, and our expectations hereafter. And we more especially rejoice that, upon every occasion of thy gracious intercourse with mankind, thou hast represented thyself to us as the proper object of our reverence, love, and confidence; as a being of boundless goodness, and the greatest compassion to those frailties and infirmities to which it has seemed good to thy infinite wisdom to subject us; as one who expectest no more of us than thou hast enabled us to perform; and who, upon our sincere return to our duty, art ever ready to extend the freest mercy and forgiveness towards us, even after our most aggravated and repeated offences.

We thank thee, more especially, for the last and most perfect revelation of thy will to mankind, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, in whom it hath pleased thee that *all fulness should dwell*; who has established upon the surest foundations, the great and important doctrines of the proper *unity* and *mercifulness* of thy nature, and thy unrivalled *supremacy* with respect to himself, as well as to all other beings, and all other things; and who has likewise given to us the most satisfactory assurance of a resurrection from the dead, confirmed to us by his own death and resurrection; whereby we are encouraged to expect, that, because he lives, we shall live also.

It has seemed good to thy unsearchable wisdom, (which permits the rise and continuance of evil, in order, we doubt not, to bring about the greatest good,) that this most excellent religion, so honourable to thee and so beneficial to mankind, should, by means of the base *artifices* of some, and the general *ignorance* which lately overspread the world, become grossly corrupted; whereby such opinions have prevailed among the professors of christianity, as greatly dishonour thy nature, imply the most unjust reflections on thy righteous moral government, and are highly injurious to the virtue and happiness of men. How has the gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed !

The great and important doctrine of thy divine *unity* has been generally abandoned, and objects of supreme worship multiplied. Thy messenger and servant, the meek and humble Jesus, who upon all occasions referred his wisdom and mighty works to thee, his God and Father, speaking and acting by him, has been advanced to proper equality with thyself; and even his mother Mary, and innumerable saints and angels, have likewise been addressed as if they were omnipresent beings. By thus dividing thy being, robbing thee of thy essential attributes and perfections, and distributing them among a multiplicity of inferior beings, depraved and unworthy notions of thy moral character have consequently prevailed, and many of the evils of *idolatry* have been introduced among the professors of that religion which acknowledges but *one living and true God, even thee our Father in heaven, and one mediator, the man Christ Jesus.*

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Having divested thee, in their imaginations, of the most amiable of all thy attributes, even the essential *placability* of thy nature, they have represented thy free mercy to penitent sinners as purchased by the blood of thy innocent son. Forgetting that thou art good to all, and that thy tender mercies are over all thy works, and also that thou, the righteous Lord, lovest righteousness, they have ascribed to thee an arbitrary and unreasonable partiality in favour of some of the human race, and a most cruel and unjust severity towards others, as condemning them to everlasting torments for crimes of which they could not be guilty, and expecting of them that which thou hadst not enabled them to do. And having lost the idea of the *purity* of thy nature, and thy regard to moral righteousness as the only just ground of acceptance and favour with thee, they have had recourse to unmeaning and even base and mischievous superstitions, as compensations for their non-observance of thy holy commandments.

To confirm all these, and innumerable other corruptions of thy holy religion, supreme authority has been openly usurped, by men, over that church in which thou hast given all power to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ; and those of thy faithful servants who have justly refused to submit to their usurpations, have by them been subjected to the greatest hardships, and even persecuted unto death; so that these temporal anti-christian powers are drunk with the blood of thy holy martyrs.

We deeply lament this almost universal departure
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from the true faith of thy son's gospel, the stop that has by this means been so long put to the propagation of christianity among Jews, Mahomedans, and Heathens ; and the prevalence which it has occasioned of infidelity and profaneness in christian countries. .

But we thank thee, who, in thine own due time, wilt, we doubt not, bring light out of all darkness, and order out of all confusion, that, in several christian countries, many of these corruptions and abuses have been reformed, and that anti-christian tyranny is every where giving place to the power of truth, and the just liberties of mankind in thinking and acting for themselves in all matters of religion.

For these great and invaluable blessings we are, under thee, indebted to the strenuous labours of thy faithful servants, who have not accounted even their lives dear unto them ; but, for the love of thy truth, have renounced all worldly advantages, boldly asserting their christian liberty, and holding themselves accountable to none but thee, the sole and immediate lord of conscience, and to the great shepherd and bishop of souls, acting by commission from thee, Jesus Christ.

We adore the wisdom of thy providence in bringing about the restoration of useful *learning*, and making it subservient to the reformation of thy church ; so that thy servants, having recovered the genuine but long forgotten sense of the scriptures, were able to discover the false grounds of the reigning superstition, and of the ecclesiastical tyranny of their times.

Grant

Grant that, by a continued and diligent study of the same word of thy truth, we may, in due time, be led to the full discovery of every remaining corruption of our holy religion, and be brought to receive the whole truth in the love thereof.

Hasten, we entreat thee, the approach of that glorious time, when, according to the faithful and true writings of thy servants the prophets, our holy religion shall recover its primitive purity and efficacy; when thou alone, as the only true God, a being of perfect rectitude, spotless purity, and essential goodness and mercy, shalt be the object of supreme worship; when thy creatures of mankind shall have recourse to no method of rendering themselves acceptable to thee, but unfeigned repentance for their transgressions of thy laws, and a sincere endeavour to conform to them for the future, in a course of upright intentions and worthy actions through the whole of their lives; and when no apprehension of arbitrary decrees shall alarm the fears of the humble, or encourage the presumption of the confident.

Dispose all who profess the christian name to study the scriptures of truth with unprejudiced minds; and inspire all those who attain to the truth with a just zeal for the propagation of it, as far as thy providence shall give them ability and opportunity to do it. May neither the love of popular applause, of filthy lucre, or any worldly advantage; may neither the fear of man, of reproach, or of death, be a snare to them, and hinder them in this work of love; and may they daily

daily rejoice in the testimony of their consciences, and in the happy fruits of their pious and assiduous labours !

May all those powers of this world which have usurped any authority belonging to our only rightful lord and king in his church become disposed to relinquish their unjust claims ; and may those kings and princes who will not acknowledge the sovereignty of Jesus in his church, and especially those who obstinately oppose the reformation of it, be utterly confounded, and, by his power, be broken in pieces like a potter's vessel ! Take to thyself, O Lord God Almighty, thy great power, and reign ; and may the gospel of Jesus Christ go forth conquering and to conquer ! May the everlasting gospel, in its primitive purity, be preached to all that dwell on the earth, to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people ! By the brightness of our Lord's appearance may the man of sin be utterly consumed, that all the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and may he reign for ever and ever !

In the mean time, may we thy faithful servants, in the patient waiting for this coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, be fearless and unwearied in asserting thy truth, be ready to lay hold of every favourable opportunity to promote it, and, more especially, be careful to recommend it by a suitable life and conversation ! May we distinguish ourselves by having the same mind that was also in Christ Jesus, by ge-
nuine

naive humility, meekness, forbearance, brotherly love, heavenly-mindedness, and habitual cheerful devotion ! that when our Lord shall return, and take account of his servants, we may be found without spot and blameless, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Now to thee who alone art eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise, living, and true God, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE

CONCLUSION.

THIS publication completes the scheme which was begun in the *Appeal*, and continued in the *Triumph of Truth*; being intended to be a plain and earnest address to the common people, and especially to those of them who have but little money to spare for the purchase of books, or time for the reading them.

I am not so little acquainted with human nature, as to expect any *great success* in this attempt to overturn long established errors ; and least of all can I hope to convince those who refuse to read, or to hear, (which is the case with too many,) on whom even miracles could produce no effect ; but the restoration of christianity to its primitive purity and efficacy, after so long and so radical a corruption, (which was foreseen and lamented by the inspired writers of the New Testament,) is so great and so worthy an object, that every man

man who has the interest of religion at heart will rejoice in every opportunity that Divine Providence affords him for promoting it, with respect to ever so few, or even a single individual, of his fellow-creatures.

A zeal for the truth, and even to contend earnestly for it, does, certainly, well become a christian. Since, however, the inspiring of a *christian spirit* is the great purpose to which purity of *christian faith* is subservient, I hope that, with respect to myself, I have been careful not to lose the *end*, while I have been contending for the *means*. Of this my reader may be a pretty good judge; since that zeal which arises from the love of truth, and of mankind, will easily be distinguished from that spirit which actuates those whom Paul calls the *disputers of this world*, a spirit which savours strongly of *pride*, *hatred*, and *malice*, and which often induces them to have recourse to unfair and unworthy *artifices* in order to gain a victory.

Some persons think that in these publications I have attacked *too many* long established errors, and that it would have been more prudent to have attempted one thing at once, and to have proceeded gradually and gently. But it should be considered, that there are in the world persons in every possible state of mind with respect to these things; so that what will stagger some, is calculated to make the strongest and best impression upon others. Since, therefore, every thing that is published from the press must be distributed *promiscuously*, we can only take care that what we write be
calculated

calculated to do good in general ; and since a nice calculation of this kind is exceedingly difficult, it appears to me to be the best, upon the whole, for every person to endeavour to establish what appears to himself to be *the whole truth*, and not to trouble himself about any consequences. The gospel sower must cast his seed promiscuously on all kinds of ground, hoping that in some it may yield a good increase, though he must lay his account with its being lost, and even worse than lost, upon others.

I also think it an objection to the slow and cautious proceeding which some persons recommend, that the evidence of any truth is exhibited to the most advantage in connection with the *whole system* to which it belongs. Nor would I conclude that, because the minds of many are staggered by bold and undisguised representations of truth, this mode of proceeding is, upon the whole, less effectual. In many cases it may be the only method of gaining a sufficient degree of *attention* to a subject ; and when this only is done, a great point is gained. The horror with which an offensive sentiment is viewed at first, may wear off by degrees, and a cool examination succeed. What could give more offence even to good minds than the manner in which Luther, and other reformers, attacked the church of Rome ? Any person would have imagined, *à priori*, that it could only offend and irritate. We must wait a considerable time before we can form a judgement of the number of converts that any person makes.

I cannot

I cannot help expressing my surprise that so many persons, and especially of the clergy of the established church, should profess themselves *Arminians*, rejecting the Calvinistic doctrines of election and reprobation, and yet entertain such a horror of *Arianism* or *Socinianism*, contending with the greatest earnestness for the divinity of Christ, and atonement for sin by his death; when it appears to me, that the literal interpretation of the language of scripture (which is almost all that can be pleaded in favour of any of those opinions) is even more favourable to the former than to the latter, as, I should think, must appear to any person who will attend to those which I have quoted in this treatise. I know that I have found much more difficulty in my attempts to explain them. I consider it, however, as an undoubted sign of the progress of just thinking in matters of religion, that the *standard of orthodoxy* is so much lower at present than it has been in former times.

Time was, and though I am not old I well remember the time, when *Arminians* would have been reckoned no better than *Socinians* by those who were reputed the *orthodox* of their day; and yet with what rage have some of these *orthodox writers* attacked a *brother heretic*! How would the manes of those old champions smile to see us *fall out by the way*, when they were confident that we must all come to the same place of torment at last! And the furious zeal of those veterans was far more plausible, and respectable,

spectable, than that of the modern pretenders to orthodoxy.

There is something *striking and consistent* in the genuine *Supralapsarian system*, of the eternally destined fall of man, an infinite penalty incurred by one, and, by the imputation of his sin, affecting all, and an infinite atonement adequate to it, made by an infinite being; by which means a small remnant of the human race are necessarily saved; while all the rest of mankind, including new-born children, unbelieving Jews, Mahometans, and Heathens, Arminians and Baxterians, Arians and Socinians, without distinction, (as destitute either of faith, or the right faith,) are consigned to everlasting torments with the Devil and his angels; from whence results *glory* to a God, who, in all this dreadful scheme, is supposed to have sought nothing else.

These are the *tremendous doctrines* which have overawed mankind for so many centuries; and, compared with this, all the *modern qualified, intermediate systems* are, crude, incoherent, and contemptible things. My antagonists may cavil at *election and reprobation*, or any other single article in the well compacted system: but every part is necessary to the whole; and if one stone be pushed out of its place, the whole building tumbles to the ground. And when, in consequence of their ill-judged attempts to alter, patch, and repair, they have brought things to this catastrophe, there will be nothing left but the simple belief,

lief, that the merciful parent of the universe, who never meant any thing but the happiness of his creatures, sent his well-beloved son, *the man, Christ Jesus*, to reclaim men from their wickedness, and to teach them the way of righteousness; assuring them, for their encouragement, of the free and unbought pardon of their sins, and promising a life of endless happiness to all that receive and obey the gospel, by repenting of their sins, and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.

This is the essence of what is called *Socinianism*; and though this simple doctrine may, on account of its excellence and simplicity, be a stumbling-block to some, and foolishness to others, I believe it to be the sum and substance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the wisdom and power of God.

Formidable as the greatest adversary of the truth may be, I make no doubt but that, by the help of reason, and the *sword of the spirit, which is the word of God*, it will be finally overcome. And whenever the *holy apostles and prophets shall rejoice* at the fall of this last part of *mystical Babylon*, Rev. xviii. 20., happy will they be who may join the chorus, as having employed their efforts, however feeble, with those who, in this great cause, fight under *the banners of the lamb*, and *who are called, and chosen, and faithful*. Rev. xvii. 14.

THE END.